A

LETTER

FROM THE

RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE, *M.P.*

IN THE KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN,

TO

SIR HERCULES LANGRISHE, BART. *M.P.*

ON THE SUBJECT OF

ROMAN CATHOLICS OF IRELAND,

AND THE

PROPRIETY OF ADMITTING THEM

TO THE

ELECTIVE FRANCHISE,

CONSISTENTLY WITH THE

PRINCIPLES OF THE CONSTITUTION

AS ESTABLISHED AT THE

REVOLUTION.

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LETTER, &c.

My Dear Sir,

YOUR remembrance of me, with ſentiments of ſo much kindneſs, has given me the moſt ſincere ſatisfaction. It perfectly agrees with the friendly and hoſpitable reception which my ſon and I received from you, ſome time ſince, when, after an abſence of twenty-two years, I had the happineſs of embracing you, among my few ſurviving friends.

I really imagined that I ſhould not again intereſt myſelf in any public buſineſs. I had, to the beſt of my moderate faculties, paid my club to the Society, which I was born, in ſome way or other to ſerve; and I thought I had a right to put on my night-gown and ſlippers, and wiſh a cheerful evening to the good company I muſt

leave behind. But if our reſolutions of vigour and exertion are ſo often broken or procraſtinated in the exertion; I think we may be excuſed, if we are not very punctual in fulfilling our engagements to indolence and inactivity. I have indeed no power of action; and am almoſt a cripple, even with regard to thinking: but you deſcend with force into the ſtagnant pool; and you cauſe ſuch a fermentation, as to cure at leaſt one impotent creature of his lameneſs, though it cannot enable him either to run or to wreſtle.

You ſee by the paper I take* that I am likely to be long, with malice prepenſe. You have brought under my view, a ſubject, always difficult, at preſent critical.——It has filled my thoughts, which I wiſh to lay open to you with the clearneſs and ſimplicity which your friendſhip demands from me. I thank you for the communication of your ideas. I ſhould be ſtill more pleaſed if they had been more your own. What you hint, I believe to be the caſe; that if you had not deferred to the judgment of others, our opinions would not differ more materially at this day, than they did when we uſed to confer on the ſame ſubject, ſo many years ago. If I ſtill perſevere in my old opinions, it is no ſmall comfort

* The letter is written on folio ſheets.

fort to me, that it is not with regard to doctrines properly yours, that I discover my indocility.

The case upon which your letter of the 10th of December turns, is hardly before me with precision enough, to enable me to form any very certain judgment upon it. It seems to be some plan of further indulgence proposed for Catholics of Ireland. You observe, "that your "general principles are not changed, but *that* "*times and circumstances are altered.*" I perfectly agree with you, that times and circumstances, considered with reference to the public, ought very much to govern our conduct; though I am far from slighting, when applied with discretion to those circumstances, general principles and maxims of policy. I cannot help observing, however, that you have said rather less upon the applicability of your own old principles to the *circumstances* that are likely to influence your conduct against these principles, than of the *general* maxims of state; which I can very readily believe not to have great weight with you personally.

In my present state of imperfect information, you will pardon the errors into which I may

eaſily fall. The principles you lay down are, "that the Roman Catholics ſhould enjoy every "thing *under* the ſtate, but ſhould not be *the* "*ſtate itſelf.*" And you add, "that when you "exclude them from being *a part of the ſtate*, "you rather conform to the ſpirit of the age, "than to any abſtract doctrine;" but you conſider the conſtitution is already eſtabliſhed—that our ſtate is Proteſtant. "It was declared ſo at "the revolution. It was ſo provided in the acts "for ſettling the ſucceſſion of the Crown:—the "King's coronation oath was enjoined, in order "to keep it ſo. The King, as firſt magiſtrate "of the ſtate, is obliged to take the oath of ab-"juration, and to ſubſcribe the declaration; "and, by laws ſubſequent, every other magiſ-"trate and member of the ſtate, and legiſlature "and executive, are bound under the ſame obli-"gation."

As to the plan to which theſe maxims are applied, I cannot ſpeak, as I told you, poſitively about it. Becauſe, neither from your letter, nor from any information I have been able to collect, do I find any thing ſettled, either on the part of the Roman Catholics themſelves, or on that of any perſons who may wiſh to conduct their affairs in Parliament. But if I have leave to

conjecture

conjecture, ſomething is in agitation towards admitting them, under *certain qualifications*, to have *ſome ſhare* in the election of members of parliament. This I underſtand is the ſcheme of thoſe who are intitled to come within your deſcription of perſons of conſideration, property, and character: and firmly attached to the king and conſtitution as by "law eſtabliſhed, with a grateful ſenſe "of your former conceſſions, and a patient re-"liance on the benignity of parliament, for the "further mitigation of the laws that ſtill affect "them."—As to the low, thoughtleſs, wild and profligate, who have joined themſelves with thoſe of other profeſſions, but of the ſame character; you are not to imagine, that, for a moment, I can ſuppoſe them to be met, with any thing elſe than the manly and enlightened energy of a firm government, ſupported by the united efforts of all virtuous men, if ever their proceedings ſhould become ſo conſiderable as to demand its notice. I really think that ſuch aſſociations ſhould be cruſhed in their very commencement.

Setting this, therefore, out of the queſtion, it becomes an object of very ſerious conſideration, whether, becauſe wicked men of *various* deſcriptions are engaged in ſeditious courſes, the rational, ſober, and valuable part of *one* deſcription ſhould not

be indulged their ſober and rational expectations? You, who have looked deeply into the ſpirit of the Popery laws, muſt be perfectly ſenſible, that a great part of the preſent miſchief, which we abhor in common, has ariſen from them. Their declared object was to reduce the Catholics of Ireland to a miſerable populace, without property, without eſtimation, without education. The profeſſed object was to deprive the few men who, in ſpite of thoſe laws, might hold or obtain any property amongſt them, of all ſort of influence or authority over the reſt. They divided the nation into two diſtinct bodies, without common intereſt, ſympathy or connexion; one of which bodies was to poſſeſs *all* the franchiſes, *all* the property, *all* the education: The others were to be drawers of water and cutters of turf for them. Are we to be aſtoniſhed that when, by the efforts of ſo much violence in conqueſt, and ſo much policy in regulation, continued without intermiſſion for near an hundred years, we had reduced them to a mob; that whenever they came to act at all, many of them would act exactly like a mob, without temper, meaſure, or foreſight? Surely it might be juſt now a matter of temperate diſcuſſion, whether you ought not apply a remedy to the real cauſe of the evil—to raiſe an ariſtocratic intereſt; that is, an intereſt of property and education

amongſt

amongſt them: and to ſtrengthen by every prudent means, the authority and influence of men of that deſcription. It will deſerve your beſt thoughts, to examine whether this can be done without giving ſuch perſons the means of demonſtrating to the reſt, that ſomething more is to be got by their temperate conduct, than can be expected from the wild and ſenſeleſs projects of thoſe, who do not belong to their body, who have no intereſt in their well being, and only wiſh to make them the dupes of their turbulent ambition.

If the abſurd perſons you mention find no way of providing for liberty, but by overturning this happy conſtitution, and introducing a frantic democracy, let us take care how we prevent better people from any rational expectations of partaking in the benefits of that conſtitution *as it ſtands*. The maxims you eſtabliſh cut the matter ſhort. They have no ſort of connexion with the good or ill behaviour of the perſons who ſeek relief, or with the proper or improper means by which they ſeek it. They form a perpetual bar to all pleas and to all expectations.

You begin by aſſerting that " they ought to " enjoy all things *under* the ſtate, but that they ought

" ought not to *be the ſtate.*" A poſition which, I believe, in the latter part of it, and in the latitude there expreſſed, no man of common ſenſe has ever thought proper to diſpute: becauſe the contrary implies, that the ſtate ought to be in them *excluſively*. But before you have finiſhed the line, you expreſs yourſelf as if the other member of your propoſition, namely, that " they " ought not to be *a part* of the ſtate," were neceſſarily included in your firſt—Whereas I conceive it to be as different, as a part is from the whole; that is juſt as different as poſſible. I know indeed that it is common with thoſe who talk very different from you, that is with heat and animoſity, to confound thoſe things, and to argue the admiſſion of the Catholics into any, however minute and ſubordinate parts of the ſtate, as a ſurrender into their hands of the whole government of the kingdom. To them I have nothing at all to ſay.

Wiſhing to proceed with a deliberative ſpirit and temper in ſo very ſerious a queſtion, I ſhall attempt to analyze, as well as I can, the principles you lay down, in order to fit them for the graſp of an underſtanding ſo little comprehenſive as mine—'State'—'Proteſtant'—'Revolution' —Theſe are terms, which if not well explained, may

may lead us into many errors.——In the word *State*, I conceive there is much ambiguity. The ſtate is ſometimes uſed to ſignify *the whole common-wealth*, comprehending all its orders, with the ſeveral privileges belonging to each. Sometimes it ſignifies only *the higher and ruling part* of the common-wealth; which we commonly call *the Government*. In the firſt ſenſe, to be under the ſtate, but not the ſtate itſelf, *nor any part of it*, is a ſituation perfectly intelligible: but to thoſe who fill that ſituation, not very pleaſant, when it is underſtood. It is a ſtate of *civil ſervitude* by the very force of the definition. *Servorum non eſt reſpublica*, is a very old and a very true maxim. This ſervitude, which makes men *ſubject* to a ſtate without being *citizens*, may be more or leſs tolerable from many circumſtances: but theſe circumſtances, more or leſs favourable, do not alter the nature of the thing. The mildneſs by which abſolute maſters exerciſe their dominion, leaves them maſters ſtill. We may talk a little preſently of the manner in which the majority of the people of Ireland (the Catholics) are affected by this ſituation; which at preſent undoubtedly is theirs, and which you are of opinion, ought to continue for ever.

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In the other ſenſe of the word *State*, by which is underſtood the *Supreme Government* only, I muſt obſerve this upon the queſtion: that to exclude whole claſſes of men entirely from this *part* of government, cannot be conſidered as *abſolute ſlavery*. It only implies a lower and degraded ſtate of citizenſhip; ſuch is (with more or leſs ſtrictneſs) the condition of all countries, in which an hereditary nobility poſſeſs the excluſive rule. This may be no bad mode of government; provided that the perſonal authority of individual nobles be kept in due bounds, that their cabals and factions are guarded againſt with a ſevere vigilance: and that the people, (who have no ſhare in granting their own money) are ſubjected to but light impoſitions, and are otherwiſe treated with attention, and with indulgence to their humours and prejudices.

The republic of Venice is one of thoſe which ſtrictly confines all the great functions and offices, ſuch as are truly *ſtate*-functions and *ſtate*-offices, to thoſe who, by hereditary right or admiſſion, are noble Venetians. But there are many offices, and ſome of them not mean nor unprofitable, which are reſerved for the *Citadini*. Of theſe all citizens of Venice are capable. The inhabitants of the *Terra firma*, who are mere ſubjects

jects of conqueſt, that is, as you expreſs it, under the ſtate, but "not a part of it," are not, however, ſubjects in ſo very rigorous a ſenſe as not to be capable of numberleſs ſubordinate employments. It is indeed one of the advantages attending the narrow bottom of their ariſtocracy (narrow as compared with their acquired dominions, otherwiſe broad enough) that an excluſion from ſuch employments cannot poſſibly be made amongſt their ſubjects. There are, beſides, advantages in ſtates ſo conſtituted, by which thoſe who are conſidered as of an inferior race, are indemnified for their excluſion from the government and from noble employments. In all theſe countries, either by expreſs laws, or by uſage more operative, the noble caſts are almoſt univerſally, in their turn, excluded from commerce, manufacture, farming of land, and in general from all lucrative civil profeſſions. The nobles have the monopoly of honour. The plebeians a monopoly of all the means of acquiring wealth. Thus ſome ſort of a balance is formed among conditions; a ſort of compenſation is furniſhed to thoſe, who, in a *limited ſenſe*, are excluded from the government of the ſtate.

Between the extreme of *a total excluſion*, to which your maxim goes, and *an univerſal unmodified*

modified capacity, to which the fanatics pretend, there are many different degrees and ſtages, and a great variety of temperaments, upon which prudence may give full ſcope to its exertions. For you know that the deciſions of prudence (contrary to the ſyſtem of the inſane reaſoners) differ from thoſe of judicature: and that almoſt all the former are determined on the more or the leſs, the earlier or the later, and on a balance of advantage and inconvenience, of good and evil.

In all conſiderations which turn upon the queſtion of veſting or continuing the ſtate ſolely and excluſively in ſome one deſcription of citizens; prudent legiſlators will conſider, how far *the general form and principles of their commonwealth render it fit to be caſt into an oligarchical ſhape, or to remain always in it.* We know that the government of Ireland (the ſame as the Britiſh) is not in its conſtitution *wholly* Ariſtocratical; and as it is not ſuch in its form, ſo neither is it in its ſpirit. If it had been inveterately ariſtocratical, excluſions might be more patiently ſubmitted to. The lot of one plebeian would be the lot of all; and an habitual reverence and admiration of certain families, might make the people content to ſee government wholly

wholly in hands to whom it ſeemed naturally to belong. But our conſtitution has *a plebeian member*, which forms an eſſential integrant part of it. A plebeian oligarchy is a monſter in itſelf: and no people, not abſolutely domeſtic or predial ſlaves, will long endure it. The Proteſtants of Ireland are not *alone* ſufficiently the people to form a democracy; and they are *too numerous* to anſwer the ends and purpoſes of *an ariſtocracy*. Admiration, that firſt ſource of obedience, can be only the claim or the impoſture of the few. I hold it to be abſolutely impoſſible for two millions of plebeians, compoſing certainly a very clear and decided majority in that claſs, to become ſo far in love with ſix or ſeven hundred thouſand of their fellow-citizens (to all outward appearance plebeians like themſelves, and many of them tradeſmen, ſervants, and otherwiſe inferior to them) as to ſee with ſatisfaction, or even with patience, an excluſive power veſted in them, by which conſtitutionally they become their abſolute maſters; and by the manners derived from their circumſtances, muſt be capable of exerciſing upon them, daily and hourly, an inſulting and vexatious ſuperiority; nor are they indemnified (as in ſome ariſtocracies) for this ſtate of humiliating vaſſalage (often inverting the nature of things and relations) by having the

lower

lower walks of induſtry wholly abandoned to them. They are rivalled, to ſay the leaſt of the matter, in every laborious and lucrative courſe of life: while every franchiſe, every honour, every truſt, every place down to the very loweſt and leaſt confidential (beſides whole profeſſions), is reſerved for the maſter caſt.

Our conſtitution is not made for great, general, and proſcriptive excluſions; ſooner or later, it will deſtroy them, or they will deſtroy the conſtitution. In our conſtitution there has always been a difference made between *a franchiſe* and *an office*, and between the capacity for the one and for the other. Franchiſes were ſuppoſed to belong to the *ſubject*, as *a ſubject*, and not *as a member of the governing part of the ſtate*. The policy of Government has conſidered them as things very different: for whilſt Parliament excluded by the teſt acts (and for a while theſe teſt acts were not a dead letter, as now they are in England) Proteſtant diſſenters from all civil and military employments, they *never touched their right of voting for members of Parliament, or ſitting in either Houſe*; a point I ſtate, not as approving or condemning the meaſure of excluſion from employments, but to prove

that

that the diſtinction has been admitted in legiſlature, as, in truth, it is founded in reaſon.

I will not here examine, whether the principles of the Britiſh [the Iriſh] conſtitution, be wiſe or not. I muſt aſſume that they are; and that thoſe who partake the franchiſes which make it, partake of a benefit. They who are excluded from votes (under proper qualifications inherent in the conſtitution that gives them) are excluded, not from the *ſtate*, but from *the Britiſh conſtitution*. They cannot by any poſſibility, whilſt they hear its praiſes continually rung in their ears, and are preſent at the declaration which is ſo generally and ſo bravely made by thoſe who poſſeſs the privilege—that the beſt blood in their veins ought to be ſhed, to preſerve their ſhare in it; they cannot, I ſay, think themſelves in an *happy* ſtate, to be utterly excluded from all its direct and all its conſequential advantages. The popular part of the conſtitution muſt be to them, by far the moſt odious part of it. To them it is not *an actual*, and, if poſſible, ſtill leſs a *virtual* repreſentation. It is indeed the direct contrary. It is power unlimited, placed in the hands of *an adverſe* deſcription, *becauſe it is an adverſe deſcription*. And if they who compoſe the pri-

vileged body have not an intereſt, they muſt but too frequently have motives of pride, paſſion, petulance, peeviſh jealouſy, or tyrannic ſuſpicion, to urge them to treat the people with contempt and rigour.

This is not a mere theory; though whilſt men are men, it is a theory that cannot be falſe. I do not wiſh to revive all the particulars in my memory; I wiſh them to ſleep for ever; but it it is impoſſible I ſhould wholly forget, what happened in ſome parts of Ireland, with very few and ſhort intermiſſions, from the year 1761 to the year 1766, both incluſive. In a country of miſerable police, paſſing from the extremes of laxity to the extremes of rigour, among a neglected, and therefore diſorderly populace—if any diſturbance or ſedition, from any grievance real or imaginary happened to ariſe, it was preſently perverted from its true nature (often criminal enough in itſelf to draw upon it a ſevere appropriate puniſhment), it was metamorphoſed into a conſpiracy againſt the ſtate, and proſecuted as ſuch. The object was, that thoſe perſons in the obnoxious deſcription (in which all offenders will be moſt commonly found, becauſe the moſt numerous and the moſt wretched) who could not eaſily, from their character and property, be ſuſpected of the crimes

crimes of the loweſt people, might be involved in the odium, in the ſuſpicion, and ſometimes in the puniſhment, of a higher and far more criminal ſpecies of offence. This did not ariſe from any one of the Popery laws ſince repealed, but from this circumſtance, that the people of that deſcription had no hold on the gentlemen who aſpired to be popular repreſentatives; and that the candidates neither loved, nor reſpected, nor feared them individually or collectively. I do not think this evil (an evil amongſt a thouſand others) at this day entirely over; for I conceive I have lately ſeen ſome indication of a diſpoſition perfectly ſimilar to the old ones; that is, a diſpoſition to carry the imputation of crimes from perſons to deſcriptions, and wholly to alter the character and quality of the offences themſelves.

This univerſal excluſion ſeems to me a ſerious evil—becauſe many collateral oppreſſions, beſides what I have juſt now ſtated, have ariſen from it. In things of this nature, it would not be either eaſy or proper to quote chapter and verſe: but I have great reaſon to believe, particularly ſince the octenial act, that ſeveral have refuſed at all to let their lands to Roman Catholics; becauſe it would ſo far diſable them from promoting ſuch intereſts in

counties as they were inclined to favour. They who conſider alſo the ſtate of all ſorts of tradeſmen, ſhopkeepers, and particularly publicans in towns, muſt ſoon diſcern the diſadvantages under which thoſe labour who have no votes. It cannot be otherwiſe, whilſt the ſpirit of elections, and the tendencies of human nature continue as they are. If property be artificially ſeparated from franchiſe, the franchiſe muſt in ſome way or other, and in ſome proportion, naturally attract property to it. Many are the collateral diſadvantages, amongſt a *privileged* people, which muſt attend thoſe who have *no* privileges. Among the rich, each individual is of importance; the poor and the middling are no otherwiſe ſo, than as they obtain ſome collective capacity, and can be aggregated to ſome corps. If legal ways are not found, illegal will be reſorted to; and ſeditious clubs and confederacies, ſuch as no man living holds in greater horror than I do, will grow and flouriſh, in ſpite, I am afraid, of any thing which can be done to prevent the evil. Lawful enjoyment is the ſureſt method to prevent unlawful gratification. Where there is property, there will be leſs theft; where there is marriage, there will always be leſs fornication.

I have ſaid enough of the queſtion of ſtate,

as it affects the people, merely as ſuch. But it is complicated with a political queſtion relative to religion, to which it is very neceſſary I ſhould ſay ſomething; becauſe the term *Proteſtant*, which you apply, is too general for the concluſions which one of your accurate underſtanding would wiſh to draw from it; and becauſe a great deal of argument will depend on the uſe that is made of that term.

It is *not* a fundamental part of the ſettlement at the revolution, that the ſtate ſhould be proteſtant without *any qualification of the term.* With a qualification it is unqueſtionably true; not in all its latitude. With the qualification, it was true before the revolution. Our predeceſſors in legiſlation were not ſo irrational (not to ſay impious) as to form an operoſe eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, and even to render the ſtate itſelf in ſome degree ſubſervient to it, when their religion (if ſuch it might be called) was nothing but a mere *negation* of ſome other---without any poſitive idea either of doctrine, diſcipline, worſhip, or morals, which they profeſſed themſelves, and which they impoſed upon others, even under penalties and incapacities--No! No! This never could have been done even by reaſonable Atheiſts. They who think religion of no import-

ance to the ſtate have abandoned it to the conſcience, or caprice of the individual; they make no proviſion for it whatſoever, but leave every club to make, or not, a voluntary contribution according to their fancies. This would be conſiſtent. The other always appeared to me to be a monſter of contradiction and abſurdity. It was for that reaſon, that ſome years ago I ſtrenuouſly oppoſed the clergy who petitioned, to the number of about three hundred, to be freed from the ſubſcription to the 39 Articles, without propoſing to ſubſtitute any other in their place. There never has been a religion of the ſtate (the few years of the Parliament only excepted) but that of *the church of England*; the church of England, before the reformation, connected with the See of Rome, ſince then, diſconnected and proteſting againſt ſome of her doctrines, and the whole of her authority, as binding in our national church: nor did the fundamental laws of this kingdom (in Ireland it has been the ſame) ever know, at any period, any other church *as an object of eſtabliſhment*; or in that light, any other Proteſtant religion. Nay our Proteſtant *toleration* itſelf at the revolution, and until within a few years, required a ſignature of thirty-ſix, and a part of a thirty-ſeventh, out of the thirty-nine Articles. So little idea had they at the revolution of *eſtabliſhing* Proteſtantiſm indefinitely,

that

that they did not indefinitely *tolerate* it under that name. I do not mean to praiſe that ſtrictneſs, where nothing more than merely religious toleration is concerned. Toleration being a part of moral and political prudence, ought to be tender and large, and not too ſcrupulous in its inveſtigations; but may bear without blame, not only very ill-grounded doctrines, but even many things that are poſitively vices, where they are *adulta et prævalida*. The good of the common-wealth is the rule which rides over the reſt; and to this every other muſt completely ſubmit.

The church of Scotland knows as little of Proteſtantiſm *undefined*, as the church of England and Ireland do. She has by the articles of union ſecured to herſelf the perpetual eſtabliſhment of *the Confeſſion of Faith*, and the *Preſbyterian* church government. In England, even during the troubled interregnum, it was not thought fit to eſtabliſh a *negative* religion; but the Parliament ſettled the *Preſbyterian*, as the church *diſcipline*; the directory, as the rule of public *worſhip*; and the *Weſtminſter catechiſm*, as the inſtitute of *faith*. This is to ſhew, that at no time was the Proteſtant religion *undefined*, eſtabliſhed here, or any where elſe, as I believe. I am ſure that when the three religions were

eſtabliſhed in Germany, they were expreſsly characterized and declared to be the *Evangelic* and *Reformed*, and the *Catholic*; each of which has its confeſſion of faith, and its ſettled diſcipline; ſo that you always may know the beſt and the worſt of them, to enable you to make the moſt of what is good, and to correct or qualify, or guard againſt whatever may ſeem evil or dangerous.

As to the coronation oath, to which you allude as oppoſite to admitting a Roman Catholic to the uſe of any franchiſe whatſoever, I cannot think that the king would be perjured if he gave his aſſent to any regulation which Parliament might think fit to make, with regard to that affair. The king is bound by law, as clearly ſpecified in ſeveral acts of Parliament, to be in communion with the church of England. It is a part of the tenure by which he holds his crown; and though no proviſion was made till the revolution, which could be called poſitive and valid in law, to aſcertain this great principle; I have always conſidered it as in fact fundamental, that the king of England ſhould be of the Chriſtian religion, according to the national legal church for the time being. I conceive it was ſo before the reformation, and that ſince the reformation it became doubly neceſſary; becauſe

becauſe the king is the head of that church; in ſome ſort an eccleſiaſtical perſon; and it would be incongruous and abſurd, to have the head of the church of one faith, and the members of another. The king may *inherit* the crown as a *Proteſtant*, but he cannot *hold it* according to law, without being a Proteſtant *of the church of England.*

Before we take it for granted, that the king is bound by his coronation oath, not to admit any of his Catholic ſubjects to the rights and liberties, which ought to belong to them as Engliſhmen (not as religioniſts) or to ſettle the conditions or proportions of ſuch admiſſion by an act of Parliament; I wiſh you to place before your eyes that oath itſelf, as it is ſettled in the act of William and Mary.

" Will you to the utmoſt of your power main-
" tain—The [1] laws of God—the [2] true Profeſſion
" of the [3] goſpel—and The proteſtant [4] reformed
" religion *as it is eſtabliſhed by law.*—And will
" you [5] preſerve unto *biſhops* and clergy, and the
" churches committed to *their* charge, all ſuch
" rights and privileges as by law do, or ſhall
" appertain to them, or any of them.—All this
" I promiſe to do."

Here

Here are the coronation engagements of the King. In them I do not find one word to preclude his Majeſty from conſenting to any arrangement which Parliament may make with regard to the civil privileges of any part of his ſubjects.

It may not be amiſs, on account of the light which it may throw on this diſcuſſion, to look a little more narrowly into the matter of that oath—in order to diſcover how far it has hitherto operated as a bar to any proceedings of the Crown and Parliament, in favour of thoſe againſt whom it may be ſuppoſed that the king has engaged to ſupport the Proteſtant church of England in the two kingdoms, in which it is eſtabliſhed by law. Firſt, the king ſwears he will maintain to the utmoſt of his power, "the "laws of God." I ſuppoſe it means the natural moral laws.—Secondly, he ſwears to maintain "the true profeſſion of the Goſpel." By which I ſuppoſe is underſtood *affirmatively* the Chriſtian religion.—Thirdly, that he will maintain "the "Proteſtant reformed religion." This leaves me no power of ſuppoſition or conjecture; for it is defined and deſcribed by the ſubſequent words, "eſtabliſhed by law," and in this inſtance to define

define it beyond all poſſibility of doubt, he "ſwears to maintain the biſhops and clergy, and "the churches committed to their charge," in their rights, preſent and future.

This oath as effectually prevents the King from doing any thing to the prejudice of the church in favour of Sectaries, Jews, Mahometans, or plain avowed Infidels; juſt as if he ſhould do the ſame thing in favour of the Catholics. You will ſee, that it is the ſame Proteſtant Church, ſo deſcribed, which the King is to maintain and communicate with, according to the act of ſettlement of the 12th and 13th of William III. The act of the 5th of Anne, made in proſpect of the union, is entitled "An act for ſecuring the "Church of England as by law eſtabliſhed." It meant to guard the church implicitly againſt any other mode of Proteſtant religion which might creep in by means of the union. It proves beyond all doubt, that the legiſlature did not mean to guard the church on one part only, and to leave it defenceleſs and expoſed upon every other. This church, in that act, is declared to be "fundamental and eſſential" for ever, in the coſtitution of the united kingdom, ſo far as England is concerned; and I ſuppoſe as the law ſtands,

ſtands, even ſince the independence, it is ſo in Ireland.

All this ſhews, that the religion which the King is bound to maintain, has a poſitive part in it as well as a negative; and that the poſitive part of it (in which we are in perfect agreement with the Catholics and with the Church of Scotland) is infinitely the moſt valuable and eſſential. Such an agreement we had with Proteſtant Diſſenters in England, of thoſe deſcriptions who came under the toleration act of King William and Queen Mary; an act coeval with the revolution; and which ought, on the principles of the gentlemen who oppoſe the relief to the Catholics, to have been held ſacred and unalterable. Whether we agree with the preſent Proteſtant Diſſenters in the points at the revolution held eſſential and fundamental among Chriſtians, or in any other fundamental, at preſent it is impoſſible for us to know; becauſe, at their own very earneſt deſire, we have repealed the toleration act of William and Mary, and diſcharged them from the ſignature required by that act; and becauſe we know that, for the far greater part, they publicly declare againſt all manner of confeſſions of faith, even the *conſenſus*.

I dwell

I dwell a little the longer upon this matter, and take the more pains, to put us both in mind that it was not ſettled at the revolution, that the ſtate ſhould be proteſtant, in the latitude of the term, but in a defined and limited ſenſe only, and that, in that ſenſe only, the King is ſworn to maintain it, for reaſons forcible enough at all times, but at this time peculiarly ſo. To ſuppoſe that the King has ſworn with his utmoſt power to maintain what it is wholly out of his power to diſcover, or which, if he could diſcover, he might diſcover to conſiſt of things directly contradictory to each other, ſome of them perhaps, impious, blaſphemous, and ſeditious upon principle, would be not only a groſs, but a moſt miſchievous abſurdity. It would make a merit of diſſenting from the church of England, becauſe the man happens to diſſent from the church of Rome alſo; for a man is certainly the moſt perfect Proteſtant, and the moſt perfect Diſſenter, who proteſts againſt, and diſſents from the whole Chriſtian Religion. Whether a perſon's having no Chriſtian Religion, be a title to favour in excluſion to the largeſt deſcription of Chriſtians who hold all the doctrines of Chriſtianity, though holding along with them ſome errors and ſome ſuperfluities, is rather more than any man

who

who has not become recreant and apoſtate from his baptiſm, will, I believe, chooſe to affirm. The countenance given from a ſpirit of controverſy to that negative religion, may, by degrees, encourage light and unthinking people to a total indifference to every thing poſitive in matters of doctrine; and, in the end, of practice too. If continued, it would play the game of that ſort of of active, proſelytizing, and perſecuting atheiſm, which is the diſgrace and calamity of our time, and which we ſee to be as capable of ſubverting a government, as any mode of miſguided zeal for better things.

Now let us fairly ſee what courſe has been taken relative to thoſe, againſt whom, in part at leaſt, the King has ſworn to maintain a church, *poſitive in its doctrine and its diſcipline.* The firſt thing done, even when the oath was freſh in the mouth of the ſovereigns, was to give a toleration to Proteſtant Diſſenters, *whoſe doctrines they aſcertained.* As to the mere civil privileges which the Diſſenters held as ſubjects before the revolution, theſe were not touched at all. The laws have fully permitted, in a qualification for all offices, to ſuch Diſſenters, *an occaſional conformity*; a thing I believe ſingular, where teſts are admitted. The act called the Teſt Act itſelf, is, with

regard

regard to them, grown to be hardly any thing more than a dead letter. Whenever the Diſſenters ceaſe by their conduct to give any alarm to the government, in church and ſtate, I think it very probable that even this matter, rather diſguſtful than inconvenient to them, may be removed, or at leaſt ſo modified as to diſtinguiſh the qualification to thoſe offices which really *guide the ſtate*, from thoſe which are *merely inſtrumental*; or that ſome other and better teſts may be put in their place.

So far as to England. In Ireland you have outran us. Without waiting for an Engliſh example, you have totally, and without any modification whatſoever, repealed the teſt as to Proteſtant Diſſenters. Not having the repealing act by me, I ought not to ſay poſitively that there is no exception in it; but if it be, what I ſuppoſe you know very well, that a Jew in religion, or a Mahometan, or even *a public, declared Athieſt*, and blaſphemer, is perfectly qualified to be lord lieutenant, a lord juſtice, or even keeper of the king's conſcience; and by virtue of his office (if with you it be as it is with us) adminiſtrator to a great part of the eccleſiaſtical patronage of the crown.

Now

Now let us deal a little fairly. We muſt admit, that Proteſtant diſſent was one of the quarters from which danger was apprehended at the revolution, and againſt which a part of the coronation oath was peculiarly directed. By this unqualified repeal, you certainly did not mean to deny that it was the duty of the crown to preſerve the church againſt Proteſtant Diſſenters; or taking this to be the true ſenſe of the two revolution acts of King William, and of the previous and ſubſequent union acts of Queen Anne, you did not declare by this moſt unqualified repeal, by which you broke down all the barriers, not invented, indeed, but carefully preſerved at the revolution; you did not then and by that proceeding declare, that you had adviſed the king to perjury towards God, and perfidy towards the church. No! far, very far from it! you never would have done it, if you did not think it could be done with perfect repoſe to the royal conſcience, and perfect ſafety to the national eſtabliſhed religion. You did this upon a full conſideration of the circumſtances of your country. Now if circumſtances required it, why ſhould it be contrary to the king's oath, his parliament judging on thoſe circumſtances, to reſtore to his Catholic people, in ſuch meaſure, and with

with ſuch modifications as the public wiſdom ſhall think proper to add, *ſome part* in theſe franchiſes which they formerly had held without any limitation at all, and which, upon no ſort of urgent reaſon at the time, they were deprived of? If ſuch means can with any probability be ſhewn, from circumſtances, rather to add ſtrength to our mixed eccleſiaſtical and ſecular conſtitution, than to weaken it; ſurely they are means infinitely to be preferred to penalties, incapacities and proſcriptions continued from generation to generation. They are perfectly conſiſtent with the other parts of the Coronation Oath, in which the king ſwears to maintain "the laws of "God and the true profeſſion of the goſpel, and "to govern the people according to the ſtatutes "in Parliament agreed upon, and the laws and "cuſtoms of the realm." In conſenting to ſuch a ſtatute, the Crown would act at leaſt as agreeable to the laws of God, and to the true profeſſion of the goſpel, and to the laws and cuſtoms of the kingdom, as George I. did when he paſſed the ſtatute which took from the body of the people, every thing which, to that hour, and even after the monſtrous acts of the 2d and 8th of Anne, (the objects of common hatred) they ſtill enjoyed inviolate.

It is hard to diſtinguiſh with the laſt degree of accuracy, what laws are fundamental, and what not. However there is a diſtinction authorized by the writers on juriſprudence, and recognized in ſome of our ſtatutes. I admit the acts of King William and Queen Anne to be fundamental, but they are not the *only* fundamental laws. The law called *Magna Charta*, by which it is provided that, "no man ſhall be diſſeized of his "liberties and free cuſtoms but by the judg- "ment of his peers, or the laws of the land" (meaning clearly for ſome proved crime tried and adjudged), I take to be a *fundamental law*. Now, although this Magna Charta, or ſome of the ſtatutes eſtabliſhing it, provide that that law ſhall be perpetual, and all ſtatutes contrary to it ſhall be void: yet I cannot go ſo far as to deny the authority of ſtatutes made in defiance of Magna Charta and all its principles. This however I will ſay, that it is a very venerable law, made by very wiſe and learned men, and that the legiſlature in their attempt to perpetuate it, even againſt the authority of future parliaments, have ſhewn their judgment that it is *fundamental*, on the ſame grounds, and in the ſame manner that the act of the fifth of Anne has conſidered, and declared the eſtabliſhment of the church of England to be fundamental. Magna Charta, which ſecured theſe franchiſes to the

ſubjects,

ſubjects, regarded the rights of freeholders in counties to be as much a fundamental part of the conſtitution, as the eſtabliſhment of the church of England was thought either at that time, or in the act of King William, or in the act of Queen Anne.

The churchmen, who led in that tranſaction, certainly took care of the material intereſt of which they were the natural guardians. It is the firſt article of Magna Charta, "that the "church of England ſhall be free," &c. &c. But churchmen, and barons, and knights, took care of the franchiſes and free cuſtoms of the people too. Thoſe franchiſes are part of the conſtitution itſelf, and inſeparable from it. It would be a very ſtrange thing if there ſhould not only exiſt, anomalies in our laws, a thing not eaſy to prevent, but, that the fundamental parts of the conſtitution ſhould be perpetually and irreconcilably at variance. I cannot perſuade myſelf that the lovers of our church are not as able to find effectual ways of reconciling its ſafety with the franchiſes of the people, as the eccleſiaſtics of the thirteenth century were able to do; I cannot conceive how any thing worſe can be ſaid of the Proteſtant religion of the church of England than this, that wherever it is judged proper to give it a legal eſtabliſhment,

it becomes neceſſary to deprive the body of the people, if they adhere to their old opinions, of "their liberties and of all their free cuſtoms," and to reduce them to a ſtate of *civil* ſervitude.

There is no man on earth, I believe, more willing than I am to lay it down as a fundamental of the conſtitution, that the church of England ſhould be united and even identified with it: but allowing this, I cannot allow that all *laws of regulation*, made from time to time, in ſupport of that fundamental law, are, of courſe, equally fundamental and equally unchangeable. This would be to confound all the branches of legiſlation and of juriſprudence.---The *Crown* and the perſonal ſafety of the monarch are *fundamentals* in our conſtitution: Yet, I hope that no man regrets, that the rabble of ſtatutes got together during the reign of Henry the Eighth, by which treaſons are multiplied with ſo prolific an energy, have been all repealed in a body; although they were all, or moſt of them, made in ſupport of things truly fundamental in our conſtitution. So were ſeveral of the acts by which the crown exerciſed its ſupremacy; ſuch as the act of Elizabeth, for making the *high commiſſion courts*, and the like; as well as things made treaſon in the time of Charles II. None of this ſpecies of

ſecondary

ſecondary and ſubſidiary laws have been held fundamental. They have yielded to circumſtances: particularly where they were thought, even in their conſequences, or obliquely, to affect other fundamentals. How much more, certainly, ought they to give way, when, as in our caſe, they effect, not here and there, in ſome particular point, or in their conſequence, but univerſally, collectively, and directly, the fundamental franchiſes of a people, equal to the whole inhabitants of ſeveral reſpectable kingdoms and ſtates; equal to the ſubjects of the kings of Sardinia or Denmark; equal to thoſe of the United Netherlands; and more than are to be found in all the ſtates of Switzerland. This way of proſcribing men by whole nations, as it were, from all the benefits of the conſtitution to which they were born, I never can believe to be politic or expedient, much leſs neceſſary for the exiſtence of any ſtate or church in the world. Whenever I ſhall be convinced, which will be late and reluctantly, that the ſafety of the church is utterly inconſiſtent with all the civil rights whatſoever of the far larger part of the inhabitants of our country, I ſhall be extremely ſorry for it; becauſe I ſhall think the church to be truly in danger. It is putting things into the poſition of

an ugly alternative, into which, I hope in God, they never will be put.

I have ſaid moſt of what occurs to me on the topics you touch upon, relative to the religion of the king, and his coronation oath. I ſhall conclude the obſervations which I wiſhed to ſubmit to you on this point, by aſſuring you, that I think you the moſt remote that can be conceived from the metaphyſicians of our times, who are the moſt fooliſh of men, and who, dealing in univerſals and eſſences, ſee no difference between more and leſs; and who of courſe would think that the reaſon of the law which obliged the king to be a communicant of the church of England, would be as valid to exclude a Catholic from being an exciſeman, or to deprive a man who has five hundred a year, under that deſcription, from voting on a par with a factitious Proteſtant Diſſenting freeholder of forty ſhillings.

Recollect, my dear friend, that it was a fundamental principle in the French monarchy, whilſt it ſtood, that the ſtate ſhould be Catholic; yet the edict of Nantz gave, not a full eccleſiaſtical, but a complete civil *eſtabliſhment*, with places of which only they were capable, to the Calviniſts of France; and there were very few employments indeed of which they were not capable. The world

world praiſed the Cardinal de Richlieu, who took the firſt opportunity to ſtrip them of their fortified places and cautionary towns. The ſame world held and does hold in execration (ſo far as that buſineſs is concerned) the memory of Louis the Fourteenth, for the total repeal of that favourable edict; though the talk of "fundamental laws, eſtabliſhed religion, religion of the prince, ſafety to the ſtate," *&c. &c.* was then as largely held, and with as bitter a revival of the animoſities of the civil confuſions during the ſtruggles between the parties, as now they can be in Ireland.

Perhaps there are thoſe who think that the ſame reaſon does not hold when the religious relation of the ſovereign and ſubject is changed; but they who have their ſhop full of falſe weights and meaſures, and who think that the adding or taking away the name of Proteſtant or Papiſt, Guelph or Ghibelline, alters all the principles of equity, policy, and prudence, leave us no common data upon which we can reaſon. I therefore paſs by all this, which on you will make no impreſſion, to come to what ſeems to be a ſerious conſideration in your mind; I mean the dread you expreſs of "reviewing, for the purpoſe of altering, the *principles of the Revolution*." This is an intereſting topic; on which I will, as fully

as your leiſure and mine permits, lay before you the ideas I have formed.

Firſt, I cannot poſſibly confound in my mind all the things which were done at the Revolution, with the *principles* of the Revolution. As in moſt great changes many things were done from the neceſſities of the time, well or ill underſtood, from paſſion or from vengeance, which were not only, not perfectly agreeable to its principles, but in the moſt direct contradiction to them. I ſhall not think that the *deprivation of ſome millions of people of all the rights of citizens, and all intereſt in the conſtitution, in and to which they were born*, was a thing conformable to the *declared principles* of the Revolution. This I am ſure is true relatively to England (where the operation of theſe *anti-principles* comparatively were of little extent), and ſome of our late laws on that ſubject admit it. But the Revolution operated differently in England and Ireland, in many, and theſe eſſential particulars. Suppoſing the principles to have been altogether the ſame in both kingdoms, by the application of thoſe principles to very different objects, the whole ſpirit of the ſyſtem was changed, not to ſay reverſed. In England it was the ſtruggle of the *great body* of the people for the eſtabliſhment of

of their liberties, againſt the efforts of a very *ſmall faction*, who would have oppreſſed them. In Ireland it was the eſtabliſhment of the power of the ſmaller number, at the expence of the civil liberties and properties of the far greater part; and at the expence of the political liberties of the whole. It was, to ſay the truth, not a revolution, but a conqueſt; which is not to ſay a great deal in its favour. To inſiſt on every thing done in Ireland at the Revolution, would be to inſiſt on the ſevere and jealous policy of a conqueror, in the crude ſettlement of his new acquiſition, as a *permanent* rule for its future government. This, no power, in no country that ever I heard of, has done or profeſſed to do—except in Ireland; where it is done, and poſſibly by ſome people will be profeſſed. Time has, by degrees, in all other places and periods, blended and coalited the conquered with the conquerors. So, after ſome time, and after one of the moſt rigid conqueſts that we read of in hiſtory, the Normans ſoftened into the Engliſh. I wiſh you to turn your recollection to the fine ſpeech of Cerealis to the Gauls, to diſſuade them from revolt. Speaking of the Romans,—"*Nos* "quamvis toties laceſſiti, jure victoriæ id ſolum "vobis addidimus, quo pacem tueremur; nam "neque

" neque quies gentium ſine armis ; neque arma
" ſine ſtipendiis ; neque ſtipendia ſine tributis,
" haberi queant. *Cætera in communi ſita ſunt :* ipſi
" plerumque noſtris exercitibus *præſidetis :* ipſi has
" aliaſque provincias, *regitis : nil ſeperatum clau-*
" *ſumve*—Proinde Pacem et urbem, quam *victo-*
" *res victique eodem jure obtinemus*, amate, colite."
You will conſider, whether the arguments uſed by that Roman to theſe Gauls, would apply to the caſe in Ireland ; and whether you could uſe ſo plauſible a preamble to any ſevere warning you might think it proper to hold out to thoſe who ſhould reſort to ſedition inſtead of ſupplication, to obtain any object that they may purſue with the governing power.

For a much longer period than that which had ſufficed to blend the Romans with the nation to which of all others they were the moſt adverſe, the Proteſtants ſettled in Ireland, conſidered themſelves in no other light than that of a ſort of a colonial garriſon, to keep the natives in ſubjection to the other ſtate of Great Britain. The whole ſpirit of the revolution in Ireland, was that of not the mildeſt conqueror. In truth, the ſpirit of thoſe proceedings did not commence at that æra, nor was religion of any kind their

primary

primary object What was done, was not in the ſpirit of a conteſt between two religious factions; but between two adverſe nations. The ſtatutes of Kilkenny ſhew, that the ſpirit of the popery laws, and ſome even of their actual proviſions, as applied between Engliſhry and Iriſhry, had exiſted in that haraſſed country before the words Proteſtant and Papiſt were heard of in the world. If we read Baron Finglas, Spenſer, and Sir John Davis, we cannot miſs the true genius and policy of the Engliſh government there before the revolution, as well as during the whole reign of Queen Elizabeth. Sir John Davis boaſts of the benefits received by the natives, by extending to them the Engliſh law, and turning the whole kingdom into ſhire ground. But the appearance of things alone was changed. The original ſcheme was never deviated from for a ſingle hour. Unheard of confiſcations were made in the northern parts, upon grounds of plots and conſpiracies, never proved upon their ſuppoſed authors. The war of chicane ſucceeded to the war of arms and of hoſtile ſtatutes; and a regular ſeries of operations were carried on, particularly from Chicheſter's time, in the ordinary courts of juſtice, and by ſpecial commiſſions and inquiſitions; firſt, under pretence of tenures, and then of titles in the crown, for the purpoſe of the total

extirpation

extirpation of the intereſt of the natives in their own ſoil—until this ſpecies of ſubtile ravage, being carried to the laſt exceſs of oppreſſion and inſolence under Lord Stafford, it kindled at length the flames of that rebellion which broke out in 1641. By the iſſue of that war, by the turn which the Earl of Clarendon gave to things at the reſtoration, and by the total reduction of the kingdom of Ireland in 1691; the ruin of the native Iriſh, and in a great meaſure too, of the firſt races of the Engliſh, was completely accompliſhed. The new Engliſh intereſt was ſettled with as ſolid a ſtability as any thing in human affairs can look for. All the penal laws of that unparalleled code of oppreſſion, which were made after the laſt event, were manifeſtly the effects of national hatred and ſcorn towards a conquered people; whom the victors delighted to trample upon, and were not at all afraid to provoke. They were not the effect of their fears but of their ſecurity. They who carried on this ſyſtem, looked to the irreſiſtible force of Great Britain for their ſupport in their acts of power. They were quite certain that no complaints of the natives would be heard on this ſide of the water, with any other ſentiments than thoſe of contempt and indignation. Their cries ſerved only to augment their torture. Ma-

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chines which could anſwer their purpoſes ſo well, muſt be of an excellent contrivance. Indeed at that time in England, the double name of the complainants, Iriſh and Papiſts (it would be hard to ſay, ſingly, which was the moſt odious) ſhut up the hearts of every one againſt them. Whilſt that temper prevailed, and it prevailed in all its force to a time within our memory, every meaſure was pleaſing and popular, juſt in proportion as it tended to haraſs and ruin a ſet of people, who were looked upon as enemies to God and man; and indeed as a race of bigotted ſavages who were a diſgrace to human nature itſelf.

However, as the Engliſh in Ireland began to be domiciliated, they began alſo to recollect that they had a country. The *Engliſh intereſt* at firſt by faint and almoſt inſenſible degrees, but at length openly and avowedly, became an *independent Iriſh intereſt*; full as independent as it could ever have been, if it had continued in the perſons of the native Iriſh; and it was maintained with more ſkill, and more conſiſtency than probably it would have been in theirs. With their views, they changed their maxims—it was neceſſary to demonſtrate to the whole people, that there

there was ſomething at leaſt, of a common intereſt, combined with the independency, which was to become the object of common exertions. The mildneſs of government produced the firſt relaxation towards the Iriſh; the neceſſities, and, in part too, the temper that predominated at this great change, produced the ſecond and the moſt important of theſe relaxations. Engliſh government, and Iriſh legiſlature felt jointly the propriety of this meaſure. The Iriſh parliament and nation became independent.

The true revolution to you, that which moſt intrinſically and ſubſtantially reſembled the Engliſh revolution of 1688, was the Iriſh revolution of 1782. The Iriſh Parliament of 1782, bore little reſemblance to that which ſat in that kingdom, after the period of the firſt revolution; it bore a much nearer reſemblance (though not at all in its temper) to that which ſat under King James. The change of the Parliament in 1782 from the character of the Parliament which, as a token of its indignation, had burned all the journals indiſcriminately of the former Parliament in the council chamber, was very viſible. The addreſs of King William's Parliament,

ment, the Parliament which aſſembled after the Revolution, amongſt other cauſes of complaint (many of them ſufficiently juſt), complains of the repeal by their predeceſſors of Poyning's law; no abſolute idol with the Parliament of 1782.

Great Britain finding the Anglo-Iriſh highly animated with a ſpirit, which had indeed ſhewn itſelf before, though with little energy, and many interruptions, and therefore ſuffered a multitude of uniform precedents to be eſtabliſhed againſt it, acted in my opinion, with the greateſt temperance and wiſdom. She ſaw, that the diſpoſition of the *leading part* of the nation, would not permit them to act any longer the part of a *garriſon*. She ſaw, that true policy did not require that they ever ſhould have appeared in that character; or if it had done ſo formerly, the reaſons had now ceaſed to operate. She ſaw that the Iriſh of her race, were reſolved, to build their conſtitution and their politics, upon another bottom. With thoſe things under her view, ſhe inſtantly complied with the whole of your demands, without any reſervation whatſover. She ſurrendered that boundleſs ſuperiority, for the preſervation of which, and the acquiſition, ſhe had ſupported the Engliſh colonies in Ireland for ſo long a time, and at ſo vaſt an expence

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(according to the ſtandard of thoſe ages) of her blood and treaſure.

When we bring before us the matter which hiſtory affords for our ſelection, it is not improper to examine the ſpirit of the ſeveral precedents, which are candidates for our choice. Might it not be as well for your ſtateſmen, on the other ſide of the water, to take an example from this latter, and ſurely more conciliatory revolution, as a pattern for your conduct towards your own fellow-citizens, than from that of 1688, when a paramount ſovereignty over both you and them, was more loftily claimed, and more ſternly exerted, than at any former, or at any ſubſequent period? Great Britain, in 1782, roſe above the vulgar ideas of policy, the ordinary jealouſies of ſtate, and all the ſentiments of national pride and national ambition. If ſhe had been more diſpoſed than, I thank God for it, ſhe was, to liſten to the ſuggeſtions of paſſion, than to the dictates of prudence; ſhe might have urged the principles, the maxims, the policy, the practice of the revolution, againſt the demands of the leading deſcription in Ireland, with full as much plauſibility, and full as good a grace, as any amongſt them can poſſibly do, againſt the ſupplications of ſo vaſt and extenſive a deſcrip-

a deſcription of their own people. A good deal too, if the ſpirit of domination and excluſion had prevailed in England, might be excepted againſt ſome of the means then employed in Ireland, whilſt her claims were in agitation; they were, at leaſt, as much out of ordinary courſe, as thoſe which are now objected againſt admitting your people to any of the benefits of an Engliſh conſtitution.

Moſt certainly, neither with you, nor here, was any one ignorant of what was at that time ſaid, written, and done. But on all ſides we ſeparated the means from the end: and we ſeparated the cauſe of the moderate and rational, from the ill-intentioned and ſeditious; which on ſuch occaſions are ſo frequently apt to march together. At that time, on your part, you were not afraid to review what was done at the revolution of 1688; and what had been continued during the ſubſequent flouriſhing period of the Britiſh empire. The change then made was a great and fundamental alteration. In the execution, it was an operoſe buſineſs on both ſides of the water. It required the repeal of ſeveral laws; the modification of many, and a new courſe to be given to an infinite number of legiſlative, judicial, and official practices and uſages

in both kingdoms. This did not frighten any of us. You are now aſked to give, in ſome moderate meaſure, to your fellow-citizens, what Great Britain gave to you, without any meaſure at all. Yet, notwithſtanding all the difficulties at the time, and the apprehenſions which ſome very well-meaning people entertained, through the admirable temper in which this revolution (or reſtoration in the nature of a revolution) was conducted in both kingdoms; it has hitherto produced no inconvenience to either; and I truſt, with the continuance of the ſame temper, that it never will. I think that this ſmall inconſiderable change relative to an excluſion ſtatute (not made at the revolution) for reſtoring the people to the benefits, from which the green ſoreneſs of a civil war had not excluded them, will be productive of no ſort of miſchief whatſoever. Compare what was done in 1782, with what is wiſhed in 1792; conſider the ſpirit of what has been done at the ſeveral periods of reformation; and weigh maturely, whether it be exactly true, that conciliatory conceſſions, are of good policy only in diſcuſſions between nations; but that among deſcriptions in the ſame nation, they muſt always be irrational and dangerous. What have you ſuffered in your peace, your proſperity, or, in what ought ever to be dear to a nation, your glory,

glory, by the laſt act by which you took the property of that people under the protection of the *laws?* What reaſon have you to dread the conſequences of admitting the people poſſeſſing that propety to ſome ſhare in the protection of the *conſtitution?*

I do not mean to trouble you with any thing to remove the objections, I will not call them arguments, againſt this meaſure, taken from a ferocious hatred to all that numerous deſcription of Chriſtians. It would be to pay a poor compliment to your underſtanding or your heart. Neither *your* religion, nor *your* politics conſiſt "in odd perverſe antipathies." You are not reſolved to perſevere in proſcribing from the conſtitution, ſo many millions of your countrymen, becauſe, in contradiction to experience and to common ſenſe, you think proper to imagine, that their principles are ſubverſive of common human ſociety. To that I ſhall only ſay, that whoever has a temper, which can be gratified by indulging himſelf in theſe good-natured fancies, ought to do a great deal more. For an excluſion from the privileges of Britiſh ſubjects, is not a cure for ſo terrible a diſtemper of the human mind, as they are pleaſed to ſuppoſe in their countrymen. I rather conceive thoſe privileges

to be itſelf a remedy for ſome mental diſorders.

As little ſhall I detain you with matters that can as little obtain admiſſion into a mind like yours; ſuch as the fear, or pretence of fear, that in ſpite of your own power, and the trifling power of Great Britain, you may be conquered by the Pope; or that this commodious bugbear (who is of infinitely more uſe to thoſe who pretend to fear, than to thoſe who love him) will abſolve his Majeſty's ſubjects from their allegiance, and ſend over the cardinal of York to rule you as his viceroy; or that, by the plenitude of his power, he will take that fierce tyrant, the king of the French, out of his jail, and arm that nation (which on all occaſions treats his Holineſs ſo very politely) with his bulls and pardons, to invade poor old Ireland, to reduce you to popery and ſlavery, and to force the free-born, naked feet of your people into the wooden ſhoes of that arbitrary monarch. I do not believe that diſcourſes of this kind are held, or that any thing like them will be held, by any who walk about without a keeper. Yet, I confeſs, that on occaſions of this nature, I am the moſt afraid of the weakeſt reaſonings; becauſe they diſcover the ſtrongeſt paſſions. Theſe things will never be

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brought out in definite propoſitions; they would not prevent pity towards any perſons; they would only cauſe it for thoſe who were capable of talking in ſuch a ſtrain. But I know, and am ſure, that ſuch ideas as no man will diſtinctly produce to another, or hardly venture to bring in any plain ſhape to his own mind—he will utter in obſcure, ill explained doubts, jealouſies, ſurmiſes, fears, and apprehenſions; and that in ſuch a fog, they will appear to have a good deal of ſize, and will make an impreſſion; when, if they were clearly brought forth and defined, they would meet with nothing but ſcorn and deriſion.

There is another way of taking an objection to this conceſſion, which I admit to be ſomething more plauſible, and worthy of a more attentive examination. It is, that this numerous claſs of people is mutinous, diſorderly, prone to ſedition, and eaſy to be wrought upon by the inſidious arts of wicked and deſigning men; that conſcious of this, the ſober, rational, and wealthy part of that body, who are totally of another character, do by no means deſire any participation for themſelves, or for any one elſe of their deſcription, in the franchiſes of the Britiſh conſtitution.

I have great doubt of the exactneſs of any part of this obſervation. But let us admit that the body of the Catholics are prone to ſedition (of which, as I have ſaid, I entertain much doubt), is it poſſible, that any fair obſerver or fair reaſoner, can think of confining this deſcription to them only? I believe it to be poſſible for men to be mutinous and ſeditious who feel no grievance: but I believe no man will aſſert ſeriouſly, that when people are of a turbulent ſpirit, the beſt way to keep them in order, is to furniſh them with ſomething ſubſtantial to complain of.

You ſeparate very properly the ſober, rational, and ſubſtantial part of their deſcription from the reſt. You give, as you ought to do, weight only to the former. What I have always thought of the matter is this—that the moſt poor, illiterate, and uninformed creatures upon earth, are judges of a *practical* oppreſſion. It is a matter of feeling; and as ſuch perſons generally have felt moſt of it, and are not of an over-lively ſenſibility, they are the beſt judges of it. But for the *real cauſe*, or the *appropriate remedy*, they ought never to be called into council about the one or the other. They ought to be totally ſhut out; becauſe their reaſon is weak; becauſe

cauſe when once rouſed, their paſſions are ungoverned; becauſe they want information; becauſe the ſmallneſs of the property which individually they poſſeſs, renders them leſs attentive to the conſequence of the meaſures they adopt in affairs of moment. When I find a great cry amongſt the people, who ſpeculate little, I think myſelf called ſeriouſly to examine into it, and to ſeparate the real cauſe from the ill effects of the paſſion it may excite; and the bad uſe which artful men may make of an irritation of the popular mind. Here we muſt be aided by perſons of a contrary character; we muſt not liſten to the deſperate or the furious; but it is therefore neceſſary for us to diſtinguiſh who are the *really* indigent, and the *really* intemperate. As to the perſons who deſire this part in the conſtitution, I have no reaſon to imagine that they are perſons who have nothing to loſe and much to look for in public confuſion. The popular meeting from which apprehenſions have been entertained, has aſſembled. I have accidentally had converſation with two friends of mine, who knew ſomething of the gentleman who was put into the chair upon that occaſion; one of them has had money tranſactions with him; the other, from curioſity, has been to ſee his concerns: they both tell me he is a man of ſome property; but you muſt be

the beſt judge of this, who by your office, are likely to know his tranſactions. Many of the others are certainly perſons of fortune; and all, or moſt, fathers of families, men in reſpectable ways of life; and ſome of them far from contemptible; either for their information, or for the abilities which they have ſhewn in the diſcuſſion of their intereſts. What ſuch men think it for their advantage to acquire, ought not, *prima facia*, to be conſidered as raſh or heady, or incompatible with the public ſafety or welfare.

I admit, that men of the beſt fortunes and reputations, and of the beſt talents and education too, may, by accident, ſhew themſelves furious and intemperate in their deſires. This is a great misfortune when it happens; for the firſt preſumptions are undoubtedly in their favour. We have two ſtandards of judging in this caſe of the ſanity and ſobriety of any proceedings of the ſubject proceeding; of unequal certainty indeed, but neither of them to be neglected: the firſt is by the value of the object ſought, the next is by the means through which it is purſued.

The object purſued, I underſtand, and have all along reaſoned as if it were ſo, is in ſome degree or meaſure to be admitted to the franchiſes of the conſtitution. Men are conſidered

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as under ſome derangement of their intellects, when they ſee good and evil in a different light from other men; when they chooſe nauſeous and unwholeſome food; and reject ſuch as to the reſt of the world ſeems pleaſant, and is known to be nutritive. I have always conſidered the Britiſh conſtitution, not to be a thing in itſelf ſo vitious, as that none but men of deranged underſtanding, and turbulent tempers could deſire a ſhare in it: on the contrary, I ſhould think very indifferently of the underſtanding and temper of any body of men, who did not wiſh to partake of this great and acknowledged benefit. I cannot think quite ſo favourably either of the ſenſe or temper of thoſe, if any ſuch there are, who would voluntarily perſuade their brethren that the object is not fit for them, or they for the object. Whatever may be my thoughts, I am quite ſure, that they who hold ſuch language, muſt forfeit all credit with the reſt. This is infallible—If they conceive any opinion of their judgment, they cannot poſſibly think them their friends. There is, indeed, one ſuppoſition, which would reconcile the conduct of ſuch gentlemen to ſound reaſon, and to the pureſt affection towards their fellow-ſufferers; that is, that they act under the impreſſion of a well-grounded fear for the

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general intereſt. If they ſhould be told, and ſhould believe the ſtory, that if they dare attempt to make their condition better, they will infallibly make it worſe—that if they aim at obtaining liberty, they will have their ſlavery doubled—that their endeavour to put themſelves upon any thing which approaches towards an equitable footing with their fellow-ſubjects, will be conſidered as an indication of a ſeditious and rebellious diſpoſition—ſuch a view of things ought perfectly to reſtore the gentlemen, who ſo anxiouſly diſſuade their countrymen from wiſhing a participation with the privileged part of the people, to the good opinion of their fellows. But what is to *them* a very full juſtification, is not quite ſo honourable to that power from whoſe maxims and temper ſo good a ground of rational terror is furniſhed. I think arguments of this kind will never be uſed by the friends of a government which I greatly reſpect; or by any of the leaders of an oppoſition whom I have the honour to know, and the ſenſe to admire. I remember Polybius tells us, that during his captivity in Italy as a Peloponeſian hoſtage—he ſolicited old Cato to intercede with the ſenate for his releaſe, and that of his countrymen: this old politician told him that he had better continue in his preſent condition, however

however irkſome, than apply again to that formidable authority for their relief; that he ought to imitate the wiſdom of his countryman Ulyſſes, who, when he was once out of the den of the Cyclops, had too much ſenſe to venture again into the ſame cavern. But I conceive too high an opinion of the Iriſh Legiſlature to think that they are to their fellow citizen, what the grand oppreſſors of mankind were to a people whom the fortune of war had ſubjected to their power. For though Cato could do ſo with regard to his ſenate, I ſhould really think it nothing ſhort of impious, to compare an Iriſh Parliament to a den of Cyclops. I hope the people, both here and with you, will always apply to their repreſentatives with becoming modeſty; but at the ſame time with minds unembarraſſed with any ſort of terror.

As to the means which they employ to obtain this object, ſo worthy of the ſober and rational minds; I do admit that ſuch means may be uſed in the purſuit of it, as may make it proper for legiſlature, in this caſe, to defer their compliance until the demandants are brought to a proper ſenſe of their duty. A conceſſion in which the governing power of our country loſes its dignity,

nity, is dearly bought even by him who obtains his object. All the people have a deep intereſt in the dignity of Parliament. But, as the refuſal of franchiſes which are drawn out of the firſt vital ſtamina of the Britiſh conſtitution, is a very ſerious thing, we ought to be very ſure, that the manner and ſpirit of the application is offenſive and dangerous indeed, before we ultimately reject all applications of this nature. The mode of application, I hear, is by petition. It is the manner in which all the ſovereign powers of the world are approached, and I never heard (except in the caſe of James the ſecond) that any prince conſidered this manner of ſupplication to be contrary to the humility of a ſubject, or to the reſpect due to the perſon or authority of the ſovereign. This rule, and a correſpondent practice, are obſerved, from the Grand Seignior, down to the moſt petty Prince, or Republic in Europe.

You have ſent me ſeveral papers, ſome in print, ſome in manuſcript. I think I had ſeen all of them, except the formula of aſſociation. I confeſs they appear to me to contain matter miſchievous, and capable of giving alarm, if the ſpirit in which they are written ſhould be found to make any conſiderable progreſs. But I am at a loſs to know how to apply them, as objections

to the caſe now before us. When I find that *the general committee* which acts for the Roman Catholics in Dublin, prefers the aſſociation propoſed in the written draft you have ſent me, to a reſpectful application in Parliament, I ſhall think the perſons who ſign ſuch a paper, to be unworthy of any privilege which may be thought fit to be granted; and that ſuch men ought, *by name*, to be excepted from any benefit under the conſtitution to which they offer this violence. But I do not find that this form of a ſeditious league has been ſigned by any perſon whatſoever, either on the part of the ſuppoſed projectors, or on the part of thoſe whom it is calculated to ſeduce. I do not find, on enquiry, that ſuch a thing was mentioned, or even remotely alluded to, in the general meeting of the Catholics, from which ſo much violence was apprehended. I have conſidered the other publications, ſigned by individuals, on the part of certain ſocieties—I may miſtake, for I have not the honour of knowing them perſonally, but I take Mr. Butler and Mr. Tandy not to be Catholics, but members of the eſtabliſhed church. Not *one* that I recollect of theſe publications, which you and I equally diſlike, appears to be written by perſons of that perſuaſion. Now, if, whilſt a man is dutifully ſoliciting a favour from Parliament, any perſon

ſhould

ſhould chuſe, in an improper manner, to ſhew his inclination towards the cauſe depending; and if that *muſt* deſtroy the cauſe of the petitioner; then, not only the petitioner, but the legiſlature itſelf is in the power of any weak friend or artful enemy, that the ſupplicant, or that the Parliament may have. A man muſt be judged by his own actions only. Certain Proteſtant Diſſenters make ſeditious propoſitions to the Catholics, which it does not appear that they have yet accepted. It would be ſtrange that the tempter ſhould eſcape all puniſhment, and that he who, under circumſtances full of ſeduction and full of provocation, has reſiſted the temptation, ſhould incur the penalty. You know, that, with regard to the Diſſenters, who are *ſtated* to be the chief movers in this vile ſcheme of altering the principles of election to a right of voting by the head, you are not able (if you ought even to wiſh ſuch a thing) to deprive them of any part of the franchiſes and privileges which they hold on a footing of perfect equality with yourſelves. *They* may do what they pleaſe with conſtitutional impunity; but the others cannot even liſten with civility to an invitation from them to an ill-judged ſcheme of liberty, without forfeiting, for ever, all hopes of any of thoſe liberties which we admit to be ſober and rational.

It

It is known, I believe, that the greater, as well as the ſounder part of our excluded countrymen, have not adopted the wild ideas, and wilder engagement, which have been held out to them; but have rather choſen to hope ſmall and ſafe conceſſions from the legal power, than boundleſs objects from trouble and confuſion. This mode of action ſeems to me to mark men of ſobriety, and to diſtinguiſh them from thoſe who are intemperate, from circumſtance or from nature. But why do they not inſtantly diſclaim and diſavow thoſe who make ſuch advances to them? In this too, in my opinion, they ſhew themſelves no leſs ſober and circumſpect. In the preſent moment, nothing ſhort of inſanity could induce them to take ſuch a ſtep. Pray conſider the circumſtances. Diſclaim, ſays ſomebody, all union with the Diſſenters;—right —But, when this your injunction is obeyed, ſhall I obtain the object which I ſolicit from you?—Oh, no—nothing at all like it!—But, in puniſhing us by an excluſion from the conſtitution, for having been invited to enter into it by a poſtern, will you puniſh by deprivation of their privileges; or mulct in any other way, thoſe who have tempted us?—Far from it—we mean to preſerve all *their* liberties and immunities, as *our* life blood. We mean to cultivate

them,

them, as brethren whom we love and reſpect—with *you*, we have no fellowſhip. We can bear, with patience, their enmity to ourſelves; but their friendſhip with you, we will not endure. But mark it well! All our quarrels with *them*, are always to be revenged upon you. Formerly, it is notorious, that we ſhould have reſented with the higheſt indignation, your preſuming to ſhew any ill-will to them. You muſt not ſuffer them, now, to ſhew any good-will to you. Know—and take it once for all—that it is, and ever has been, and ever will be, a fundamental maxim in our politics, that you are not to have any part, or ſhadow, or name of intereſt whatever, in our ſtate. That we look upon you, as under an irreverſible outlawry from our conſtitution—as perpetual and unalliable aliens.

Such, my dear Sir, is the plain nature of the argument drawn from the revolution maxims, enforced by a ſuppoſed diſpoſition in the Catholics to unite with the Diſſenters. Such it is, though it were clothed in never ſuch bland and civil forms, and wrapped up, as a poet ſays, in a thouſand "artful folds of ſacred lawn." For my own part, I do not know in what manner to ſhape ſuch arguments, ſo as to obtain admiſſion for them into a rational underſtanding.

Every

Every thing of this kind is to be reduced, at laſt, to threats of power.—I cannot ſay *væ victis*, and then throw the ſword into the ſcale. I have no ſword; and if I had, in this caſe moſt certainly I would not uſe it as a make-weight, in politic reaſoning.

Obſerve, on theſe principles, the difference between the procedure of the Parliament and the Diſſenters, towards the people in queſtion. One employs courtſhip, the other force. The Diſſenters offer bribes, the Parliament nothing but the *front negative* of a ſtern and forbidding authority. A man may be very wrong in his ideas of what is good for him. But no man affronts me, nor can therefore juſtify my affronting him, by offering to make me as happy as himſelf, according to his own ideas of happineſs. This the Diſſenters do to the Catholics. You are on the different extremes. The Diſſenters offer, with regard to conſtitutional rights and civil advantages of all ſorts, *every thing*—you refuſe *every thing*. With them, there is boundleſs, tho' not very aſſured hope; with you, a very ſure and very unqualified deſpair. The terms of alliance, from the Diſſenters, offer a repreſentation of the Commons, choſen out of the people by the head. This is abſurdly and dangerouſly

large, in my opinion; and that ſcheme of election is known to have been, at all times, perfectly odious to me. But I cannot think it right of courſe, to puniſh the Iriſh Roman Catholics by an univerſal excluſion, becauſe others, whom you would not puniſh at all, propoſe an univerſal admiſſion. I cannot diſſemble to myſelf, that, in this very kingdom, many perſons who are not in the ſituation of the Iriſh Catholics, but who, on the contrary, enjoy the full benefit of the conſtitution as it ſtands, and ſome of whom, from the effect of their fortunes, enjoy it in a large meaſure, had ſome years ago aſſociated to procure great and undefined changes (they conſidered them as reforms) in the popular part of the conſtitution. Our friend, the late Mr. Flood (no ſlight man) propoſed in his place, and in my hearing, a repreſentation not much leſs extenſive than this, for England; in which every houſe was to be inhabited by a voter—*in addition* to all the actual votes by other titles—all thoſe (ſome of the corporate) which we know do not require a houſe, or a ſhed. Can I forget that a perſon of the very higheſt rank, of very large fortune, and of the firſt claſs of ability, brought a bill into the Houſe of Lords, in the head-quarters of ariſtocracy, containing identically

cally the ſame project, for the ſuppoſed adoption of which by a club or two, it is thought right to extinguiſh all hopes in the Roman Catholics of Ireland? I cannot ſay it was very eagerly embraced or very warmly purſued. But the Lords neither did diſavow the bill, nor treat it with any diſregard, nor expreſs any ſort of diſapprobation of its noble author, who has never loſt, with king or people, the leaſt degree of the reſpect and conſideration which ſo juſtly belongs to him.

I am not at all enamoured, as I have told you, with this plan of repreſentation; as little do I reliſh any bandings or aſſociations for procuring it. But if the queſtion was to be put to you and me—*univerſal* popular repreſentation, or *none at all for us and ours*—we ſhould find ourſelves in a very awkward poſition. I don't like this kind of dilemmas, eſpecially when they are practical.

Then, ſince our oldeſt fundamental laws follow, or rather couple, freehold with franchiſe; ſince no principle of the Revolution ſhakes theſe liberties; ſince the oldeſt and one of the beſt monuments of the conſtitution, demands for the Iriſh the privilege which they ſupplicate; ſince the principles of the Revolution coincide with the de-

clarations of the Great Charter; ſince the practice of the Revolution, in this point, did not contradict its principles; ſince, from that event, twenty-five years had elapſed, before a domineering party, on a party principle, had ventured to disfranchiſe, without any proof whatſoever of abuſe, the greater part of the community; ſince the King's coronation oath does not ſtand in his way to the performance of his duty to all his ſubjects; ſince you have given to all other Diſſenters theſe privileges without limit, which are hitherto withheld, without any limitation whatſoever, from the Catholics; ſince no nation in the world has ever been known to exclude ſo great a body of men (not born ſlaves) from the civil ſtate, and all the benefits of its conſtitution; the whole queſtion comes before Parliament, as a matter for its prudence. I do not put the thing on a queſtion of right. That diſcretion which in judicature is well ſaid by Lord Coke to be a crooked cord, in legiſlature is a golden rule. Supplicants ought not to appear too much in the character of litigants. If the ſubject thinks ſo highly and reverently of the ſovereign authority, as not to claim any thing of right, that it may ſeem to be independent of its power and its free choice: and the ſovereign, on his part,

part, conſiders the advantages of the ſubjects as their right, and all their reaſonable wiſhes as ſo many claims; in the fortunate conjunction of theſe mutual diſpoſitions are laid the foundations of a happy and proſperous commonwealth. For my own part, deſiring of all things that the authority of the legiſlature under which I was born, and which I cheriſh, not only with a dutiful awe, but with a partial and cordial affection, to be maintained in the utmoſt poſſible reſpect, I never will ſuffer myſelf to ſuppoſe, that, at bottom, their diſcretion will be found to be at variance with their juſtice.

The whole being at diſcretion, I beg leave juſt to ſuggeſt ſome matters for your conſideration—Whether the government in church or ſtate is likely to be more ſecure by continuing cauſes of grounded diſcontent, to a very great number (ſay two millions) of the ſubjects? or, Whether the conſtitution, combined and balanced as it is, will be rendered more ſolid, by depriving ſo large a part of the people of all concern, or intereſt, or ſhare, in its repreſentation, actual or *virtual?* I here mean to lay an emphaſis on the word *virtual.* Virtual repreſentation is that in which there is a communion of in-

intereſts, and a ſympathy in feelings and deſires between thoſe who act in the name of any deſcription of people, and the people in whoſe name they act, though the truſtees are not actually choſen by them. This is virtual repreſentation. Such a repreſentation I think to be, in many caſes, even better than the actual. It poſſeſſes moſt of its advantages, and is free from many of its inconveniences: it corrects the irregularities in the literal repreſentation, when the ſhifting current of human affairs, or the acting of public intereſts in different ways, carry it obliquely from its firſt line of direction. The people may err in their choice; but common intereſt and common ſentiment are rarely miſtaken. But this ſort of virtual repreſentation cannot have a long or ſure exiſtence, if it has not a ſubſtratum in the actual. The member muſt have ſome relation to the conſtituent. As things ſtands, the Catholic, as a Catholic and belonging to a deſcription, has no *virtual* relation to the repreſentative; but the *contrary*. There is a relation in mutual obligation. Gratitude may not always have a very laſting power; but the frequent recurrency for favours will revive and refreſh it, and will neceſſarily produce ſome degree of mutual attention. It will pro-

duce,

duce, at leaſt, acquaintance; the ſeveral deſcriptions of people will not be kept ſo much apart, as if they were not only ſeparate nations, but ſeparate ſpecies. The ſtigma and reproach, the hideous maſk will be taken off, and men will ſee each other as they are. Sure I am, that there have been thouſands in Ireland, who have never converſed with a Roman Catholic in their whole lives, unleſs they happened to talk to their gardiner's workmen, or to aſk their way, when they had loſt it, in their ſports; or, at beſt, who had known them only as footmen, or other domeſtics of the ſecond and third order: and ſo averſe were they, ſome time ago, to have them near their perſons, that they would not employ even thoſe who could never find their way beyond the ſtable. I well remember a great, and, in many reſpects, a good man, who advertiſed for a blackſmith; but, at the ſame time, added, he muſt be a Proteſtant. It is impoſſible that ſuch a ſtate of things, though natural goodneſs in many perſons would undoubtedly make exceptions, muſt not produce alienation on one ſide, and pride and inſolence on the other.

Reduced to a queſtion of diſcretion, and that diſcretion exerciſed ſolely upon what will appear

beſt for the conſervation of the ſtate on its preſent baſis, I ſhould recommend it to your ſerious thoughts, whether the narrowing of the foundation is always the beſt way to ſecure the building? The body of disfranchiſed men will not be perfectly ſatisfied to remain always in that ſtate. If they are not ſatisfied, you have two millions of ſubjects in our boſom, full of uneaſineſs; not that they cannot overturn the act of ſettlement, and put themſelves and you under an arbitrary maſter; or, that they are not permitted to ſpawn an hydra of wild republics, on principles of a pretended natural equality in man; but, becauſe you will not ſuffer them to enjoy the ancient, fundamental, tried advantages of a Britiſh conſtitution: that you will not permit them to profit of the protection of a common father, or the freedom of common citizens: and that the only reaſon which can be aſſigned for this disfranchiſement, has a tendency more deeply to ulcerate their minds than the act of excluſion itſelf. What the conſequence of ſuch feelings muſt be, it is for you to look to. To warn, is not to menace.

I am far from aſſerting, that men will not excite diſturbances without juſt cauſe. I know that ſuch an aſſertion is not true. But, neither

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is it true that diſturbances have never juſt complaints for their origin. I am ſure that it is hardly prudent to furniſh them with ſuch cauſes of complaint, as every man who thinks the Britiſh conſtitution a benefit, may think, at leaſt, colourable and plauſible.

Several are in dread of the manœuvres of certain perſons among the Diſſenters, who turn this ill humour to their own ill purpoſes. You know, better than I can, how much theſe proceedings of certain among the Diſſenters are to be feared. You are to weigh, with the temper which is natural to you, whether it may be for the ſafety of our eſtabliſhment, that the Catholics ſhould be ultimately perſuaded that they have no hope to enter into the conſtitution, but through the Diſſenters.

Think, whether this be the way to prevent, or diſſolve factious combinations againſt the church, or the ſtate. Reflect ſeriouſly on the poſſible conſequences of keeping, in the heart of your country, a bank of diſcontent, every hour accumulating, upon which every deſcription of ſeditious men may draw at pleaſure. They, whoſe principles of faction would diſpoſe

them

them to the eſtabliſhment of an arbitrary monarchy, will find a nation of men who have no ſort of intereſt in freedom; but who will have an intereſt in that equality of juſtice or favour, with which a wiſe deſpot muſt view all his ſubjects who do not attack the foundations of his power. Love of liberty itſelf may, in ſuch men, become the means of eſtabliſhing an arbitrary domination. On the other hand, they who wiſh for a democratic republic, will find a ſet of men who have no choice between civil ſervitude, and the entire ruin of a mixed conſtitution.

Suppoſe the people of Ireland divided into three parts; of theſe (I ſpeak within compaſs) two are Catholic. Of the remaining third, one half is compoſed of Diſſenters. There is no natural union between thoſe deſcriptions. It may be produced. If the two parts Catholic be driven into a cloſe confederacy with half the third part of Proteſtants, with a view to a change in the conſtitution in church or ſtate, or both; and you reſt the whole of their ſecurity on a handful of gentlemen, clergy, and their dependants; compute the ſtrength *you have in Ireland*, to oppoſe to grounded diſcontent; to capricious innovation; to blind popular fury, and to ambitious turbulent

turbulent intrigue. You mention that the minds of ſome gentlemen are a good deal heated: and that it is often ſaid, that, rather than ſubmit to ſuch perſons having a ſhare in their franchiſes, they would throw up their independence, and precipitate an union with Great Britain.

I have heard a diſcuſſion concerning ſuch an union amongſt all ſorts of men, ever ſince I remember any thing. For my own part, I have never been able to bring my mind to any thing clear and deciſive upon the ſubject. There cannot be a more arduous queſtion. As far as I can form an opinion, it would not be for the mutual advantage of the two kingdoms; but perſons more able than I am, think otherwiſe. But, whatever the merits of this union may be, to make it a *menace*, it muſt be ſhewn to be an *evil*; and an evil more particularly to thoſe who are threatened with it, than to thoſe who hold it out as a terror. I really do not ſee how this threat of an union can operate, or that the Catholics are more likely to be loſers by that meaſure than the churchmen.

The humours of the people, and of politicians too, are ſo variable in themſelves and are ſo much

much under the occaſional influence of ſome leading men, that it is impoſſible to know what turn the public mind here would take in ſuch an event. There is but one thing certain concerning it: that this union would excite a ſtrong ferment on both ſides of the water, with ſtrong animoſities and violent paſſions, whilſt the arrangement continued in agitation. Great diviſions and vehement paſſions would precede this union, both on the meaſure itſelf and on its terms; and particularly, this very queſtion of a ſhare in the repreſentation for the Catholics, from whence the project of an union originated, would form a principal part in the diſcuſſion; and in the temper in which ſome gentlemen ſeem inclined to throw themſelves, by a ſort of high indignant paſſion, into the ſcheme, thoſe points would not be deliberated with all poſſible calmneſs.

From my beſt obſervation, I ſhould greatly doubt, whether, in the end, theſe gentlemen would obtain their object, ſo as to make the excluſion of two millions of their countrymen a fundamental article in the union. The demand would be of a nature quite unprecedented. You might obtain the union: and yet, a gentleman who,

who, under the new union eſtabliſhment, would aſpire to the honour of repreſenting his county, might poſſibly be as much obliged, as he may fear to be, under the old ſeparate eſtabliſhment, to the unſupportable mortification of aſking his neighbours, who have a different opinion concerning the elements in the ſacrament, for their votes.

I believe, nay, I am ſure, that the people of Great Britain, with or without an union, might be depended upon, in caſes of any real danger, to aid the government of Ireland with the ſame cordiality as they would ſupport their own againſt any wicked attempts to ſhake the ſecurity of the happy conſtitution in church and ſtate. But, before Great Britain engages in any quarrel, the *cauſe of the diſpute* would certainly be a part of her conſideration. If confuſions ſhould ariſe in that kingdom, from too ſteady an attachment to a proſcriptive monopolizing ſyſtem, and from the reſolution of regarding the franchiſe, and, in it the ſecurity of the ſubject, as belonging rather to religious opinions than to civil qualification and civil conduct, I doubt whether you might quite certainly reckon on obtaining an aid of force from hence, for the ſupport of that ſyſtem. We might extend your diſtrac-

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tions to this country, by taking part in them. England will be indiſpoſed, I ſuſpect, to ſend an army for the conqueſt of Ireland. What was done in 1782 is a deciſive proof of her ſentiments of juſtice and moderation. She will not be fond of making another American war in Ireland. The principles of ſuch a war would but too much reſemble the former one. The well-diſpoſed and the ill-diſpoſed in England, would (for different reaſons perhaps) be equally averſe to ſuch an enterprize. The confiſcations, the public auctions, the private grants, the plantations, the tranſplantations, which formerly animated ſo many adventurers, even among ſober citizens, to ſuch Iriſh expeditions, and which poſſibly might have animated ſome of them to the American, can have no exiſtence in the caſe that we ſuppoſe.

Let us form a ſuppoſition (no fooliſh or ungrounded ſuppoſition) that in an age, when men are infinitely more diſpoſed to heat themſelves with political than religious controverſies, the former ſhould entirely prevail, as we ſee that in ſome places they have prevailed, over the latter: and that the Catholics of Ireland, from the courtſhip paid them on the one hand, and the high

high tone of refuſal on the other, ſhould, in order to enter into all the rights of ſubjects, all become Proteſtant Diſſenters; and as the others do, take all your oaths. They would all obtain their civil objects, and the change; for any thing I know to the contrary, (in the dark as I am about the Proteſtant Diſſenting tenets) might be of uſe to the health of their ſouls. But, what ſecurity our conſtitution, in church or ſtate, could derive from that event, I cannot poſſibly diſcern. Depend upon it, it is as true as nature is true, that if you force them out of the religion of habit, education or opinion, it is not to yours they will ever go. Shaken in their minds, they will go to that where the dogmas are feweſt; where they are the moſt uncertain; where they lead them the leaſt to a conſideration of what they have abandoned. They will go to that uniformly democratic ſyſtem, to whoſe firſt movements they owed their emancipation. I recommend you ſeriouſly to turn this in your mind. Believe that it requires your beſt and matureſt thoughts. Take what courſe you pleaſe—union or no union; whether the people remain Catholics, or become Proteſtant Diſſenters, ſure it is, that the preſent ſtate of monopoly, *cannot* continue.

If

If England were animated, as I think ſhe is not, with her former ſpirit of domination, and with the ſtrong theological hatred which ſhe once cheriſhed for that deſcription of her fellow-chriſtians and fellow-ſubjects; I am yet convinced, that, after the fulleſt ſucceſs in a ruinous ſtruggle, you would be obliged finally to abandon that monopoly. We were obliged to do this, even when every thing promiſed ſucceſs in the American buſineſs. If you ſhould make this experiment at laſt, under the preſſure of any neceſſity, you never can do it well. But if, inſtead of falling into a paſſion, the leading gentlemen of the country themſelves ſhould undertake the buſineſs cheerfully, and with hearty affection towards it, great advantages would follow. What is forced, cannot be modified; but here, you may meaſure your conceſſions.

It is a conſideration of great moment, that you may make the deſired admiſſion, without altering the ſyſtem of your repreſentation in the ſmalleſt degree, or in any part. You may leave that deliberation of a parliamentary change or reform, if ever you ſhould think fit to engage in it, uncomplicated and unembarraſſed with the other queſtion. Whereas, if they are mixed

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and confounded, as ſome people attempt to mix and confound them, no one can anſwer for the effects on the conſtitution itſelf.

There is another advantage in taking up this buſineſs, ſingly and by an arrangement for the ſingle object. It is, that you may proceed by *degrees*. We muſt all obey the great law of change, it is the moſt powerful law of nature, and the means perhaps of its conſervation. All we can do, and that human wiſdom can do, is to provide that the change ſhall proceed by inſenſible degrees. This has all the benefits which may be in change, without any of the inconveniences of mutation. Every thing is provided for as it arrives. This mode will, on the one hand, prevent the *unfixing old intereſts at once*; a thing which is apt to breed a black and ſullen diſcontent, in thoſe who are at once diſpoſſeſſed of all their influence and conſideration. This gradual courſe, on the other ſide, will prevent men, long under depreſſion, from being intoxicated with a large draught of new power, which they always abuſe with a licentious inſolence. But, wiſhing, as I do, the change to be gradual and cautious, I would, in my firſt ſteps, lean rather to the ſide of enlargement than reſtriction.

It is one excellence of our conſtitution, that all our rights of election regard rather property than perſon. The ſtandard may be ſo low, or not ſo judiciouſly choſen, as in ſome degree to fruſtrate the end. But all this is for your prudence in the caſe before you, You may riſe, a ſtep or two, the qualification of the Catholic voters. But if you were, to-morrow, to put the Catholic freeholder on the footing of the moſt favoured forty-ſhilling Proteſtant Diſſenter, you know that, ſuch is the actual ſtate of Ireland, this would not make a ſenſible alteration in almoſt any *one* election in the kingdom. The effect in their favour, even defenſively, would be infinitely ſlow. But it would be healing; it would be ſatisfactory and protecting. The ſtigma would be removed. By admitting ſettled permanent ſubſtance in lieu of the numbers, you would avoid the great danger of our time, that of ſetting up number againſt property. The numbers ought never to be neglected; becauſe, (beſides what is due to them as men) collectively, though not individually, they have great property: they ought to have therefore protection: they ought to have ſecurity: they ought to have even conſideration: but they ought not to predominate.

My

My dear Sir, I have nearly done; I meant to write you a long letter; I have written a long diſſertation. I might have done it early and better. I might have been more forcible and more clear, if I had not been interrupted as I have been; and this obliges me not to write to you in my own hand. Though my hand but ſigns it, my heart goes with what I have written. Since I could think at all, thoſe have been my thoughts. You know that thirty-two years ago they were as fully matured in my mind as they are now. A letter of mine to Lord Kenmare, though not by my deſire, and full of leſſer miſtakes, has been printed in Dublin. It was written ten or twelve years ago, at the time when I began the employment, which I have not yet finiſhed, in favour of another diſtreſſed people, injured by thoſe who have vanquiſhed them, or ſtolen a dominion over them. It contained my ſentiments then; you will ſee how far they accord with my ſentiments now. Time has more and more confirmed me in them all. The preſent circumſtances fix them deeper in my mind.

I voted laſt ſeſſion, if a particular vote could be diſtinguiſhed, in unanimity, for an eſtabliſh-

ment of the Church of England *conjointly* with the eſtabliſhment which was made ſome years before by act of parliament, of the Roman Catholic, in the French conquered country of Canada. At the time of making this Engliſh eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, we did not think it neceſſary for its ſafety, to deſtroy the former Gallican church ſettlement. In our firſt act we ſettled a government altogether monarchical, or nearly ſo. In that ſyſtem, the Canadian Catholics were far from being deprived of the advantages or diſtinctions, of any kind, which they enjoyed under their former monarchy. It is true, that ſome people, and amongſt them one eminent divine, predicted at that time, that by this ſtep we ſhould loſe our dominions in America. He foretold that the Pope would ſend his indulgences thither; that the Canadians would fall in with France; declare their independence, and draw or force our colonies into the ſame deſign. The independence happened according to his prediction; but in directly the reverſe order. All our Engliſh Proteſtant colonies revolted. They joined themſelves to France; and it ſo happened that Popiſh Canada was the only place which preſerved its fidelity; the only place in which France got no footing; the only

peopled

peopled colony which now remains to Great Britain. Vain are all the prognoſtics taken from ideas and paſſions, which ſurvive the ſtate of things which give riſe to them. When laſt year we gave a popular repreſentation to the ſame Canada, by the choice of the landholders, and an ariſtocratic repreſentation, at the choice of the crown, neither was the choice of the crown, nor the election of the landholders, limited by a conſideration of religion. We had no dread for the Proteſtant church, which we ſettled there, becauſe we permitted the French Catholics, in the utmoſt latitude of the deſcription, to be free ſubjects. They are good ſubjects, I have no doubt; but I will not allow that any French Canadian Catholics are better men or better citizens than the Iriſh of the ſame communion. Paſſing from the extremity of the weſt, to the extremity almoſt of the eaſt; I have been many years (now entering into the twelfth) employed in ſupporting the rights, privileges, laws and immunities of a very remote people. I have not as yet been able to finiſh my taſk. I have ſtruggled through much diſcouragement and much oppoſition; much obloquy; much calumny, for a people with whom I have no tie, but the common bond of mankind. In this

I have

I have not been left alone. We did not fly from our undertaking, becauſe the people were Mahometans or Pagans, and that a great majority of the Chriſtians amongſt them were Papiſts. Some gentlemen in Ireland, I dare ſay, have good reaſons for what they may do, which do not occur to me. I do not preſume to condemn them; but, thinking and acting, as I have done, towards theſe remote nations, I ſhould not know how to ſhew my face, here or in Ireland, if I ſhould ſay that all the Pagans, all the Muſſulmen, and even Papiſts (ſince they muſt form the higheſt ſtage in the climax of evil) are worthy of a liberal and honourable condition, except thoſe of one of the deſcriptions, which forms the majority of the inhabitants of the country in which you I and were born. If ſuch are the Catholics of Ireland; ill-natured and unjuſt people, from our own data, may be inclined not to think better of the Proteſtants of a ſoil, which is ſuppoſed to infuſe into its ſects a kind of venom unknown in other places.

You hated the old ſyſtem as early as I did. Your firſt juvenile lance was broken againſt that giant. I think you were even the firſt who attacked the grim phantom. You have an exceeding

ceeding good underſtanding, very good humour, and the beſt heart in the world. The dictates of that temper and that heart, as well as the policy pointed out by that underſtanding, led you to abhor the old code. You abhorred it, as I did, for its vicious perfection. For I muſt do it juſtice: it was a complete ſyſtem, full of coherence and conſiſtency; well digeſted and well compoſed in all its parts. It was a machine of wiſe and elaborate contrivance; and as well fitted for the oppreſſion, impoveriſhment and degradation of a people, and the debaſement, in them, of human nature itſelf, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man. It is a thing humiliating enough, that we are doubtful of the effect of the medicines we compound. We are ſure of our poiſons. My opinion ever was (in which I heartily agreed with thoſe that admired the old code) that it was ſo conſtructed, that if there was once a breach in any eſſential part of it; the ruin of the whole, or nearly of the whole, was, at ſome time or other, a certainty. For that reaſon I honour, and ſhall for ever honour and love you, and thoſe who firſt cauſed it to ſtagger, crack, and gape.——Others may finiſh; the beginners have the glory; and, take what part you pleaſe

at

at this hour, (I think you will take the beſt) your firſt ſervices will never be forgotten by a grateful country. Adieu! Preſent my beſt regards to thoſe I know, and as many as I know in our country, I honour. There never was ſo much ability, or, I believe, virtue, in it. They have a taſk worthy of both. I doubt not they will perform it, for the ſtability of the church and ſtate, and for the union and the ſeparation of the people: for the union of the honeſt and peaceable of all ſects; for their ſeparation from all that is ill-intentioned and ſeditious in any of them.

BEACONSFIELD,
January 3, 1792.

FINIS.